

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A valve assembly for venting pressurized gases generated from within an enclosed package during a heating of the package, said valve assembly comprising:

a tubular body having an open end ~~and opposite~~ a closed end, and a side wall extending radially from said open end to said closed end, said side wall having an inner wall surface so as to define said tubular body defining a recess between said open and closed ends, said closed end having a planar surface, wherein said planar surface extends between opposite sides of said inner wall surface of said side wall, and wherein said planar surface includes having an aperture for venting the pressurized gases therethrough;

a retaining member operative for snap-fit engagement with said inner wall surface of said tubular body, said retaining member having a retaining member body, wherein said retaining member body is being spaced from said planar surface of said closed end of said tubular body; and

a membrane element formed from cast polypropylene so as to not permanently deform when the package is being heated, wherein said membrane is positioned between said planar surface of said closed end ~~of said tubular body and said retaining member so as to cover said aperture and , said membrane element being positioned along said closed end to maintain a substantially sealed environment within the packaging package, wherein a portion of said membrane element being is~~ displaceable from said aperture of said planar surface closed end to allow pressurized gases to pass through said aperture, ~~said membrane element being formed from cast polypropylene so as to not permanently deform during heating of the package.~~

2. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said tubular body includes a flanged portion defined along said open end thereof.

3. (Currently amended) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 2, wherein said tubular body includes a rim formed along at least a portion of said ~~flanged portion~~inner wall surface of said side wall so as to retain the retaining member within the recess and operative for snap-fit engagement with said retaining member.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently amended) The valve assembly as set forth in claim ~~[[4]]~~ 2, wherein said tubular body is cylindrically shaped.

6. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 5, wherein said flange portion is annular and extends radially outwardly from said tubular body.

7-8 (Cancelled)

9. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said retaining member has at least one concave edge that facilitates a removal of said retaining member from said recess.

10. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said closed end includes a plurality of apertures for venting the pressurized gases therethrough.

11. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein each of said apertures has a substantially sector shape with a diameter of 1.8 mm and a length of 2.6 mm.

12. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein the retaining member includes at least one rib extending between opposite sides thereof.

13. (Currently amended) A package comprising:

a sealing film having a continuous inner edge defining ~~[[an]]~~ a sealing film aperture;

a valve assembly sealingly secured along said inner edge of said sealing film aperture,  
said valve assembly having:

a tubular body having an open end ~~and opposite~~ a closed end, and a side wall  
extending radially from said open end to said closed end, said side wall having an inner wall  
surface so as to define said tubular body defining a recess between said open and closed ends,  
said closed end having a planar surface, wherein said planar surface extends between opposite  
sides of said inner wall surface of said side wall, and wherein said planar surface includes having  
an aperture for venting the pressurized gases therethrough;

a retaining member operative for snap-fit engagement with said inner wall surface  
of said tubular body, said retaining member having a retaining member body, wherein said  
retaining member body is being-spaced from said planar surface of said closed end of said  
tubular body; and

a membrane element formed from cast polypropylene so as to not permanently deform when the package is being heated, said membrane element positioned between said planar surface of said closed end of said tubular body and said retaining member, ~~said membrane element being positioned along said closed end to so as to cover said aperture and~~ maintain a substantially sealed environment within the ~~packaging package~~, wherein a portion of said membrane element being is displaceable from said aperture of said planar surface closed end to allow pressurized gases to pass through said aperture, ~~said membrane element being formed from cast polypropylene so as to not permanently deform during heating of the package.~~

14. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 13, wherein said tubular body includes a flanged portion defined along said open end thereof.

15. (Currently amended) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 14, wherein said tubular body includes a rim formed along at least a portion of said flanged portion and operative ~~for snap-fit engagement with said retaining member~~ inner wall surface of said side wall so as to engage the retaining member within the recess.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Currently amended) The valve assembly as set forth in claim ~~[[16]]~~ 14, wherein said tubular body is cylindrically shaped.

18. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 17, wherein said flange portion is annular and extends radially outwardly said tubular body.

19-20 (Cancelled)

21. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 13, wherein said closed end includes a plurality of apertures for venting the pressurized gases therethrough.

22. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said membrane element is displaced from said closed end in response to pressure within the package exceeds a pressure ranging between 4-7.5 mbars allowing pressurized gases to pass through said aperture.